

# UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE EXTENSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the urgent need to extend unemployment insurance for struggling Americans. Forty-five percent of all unemployed workers—more than 6 million people—have been out of work for more than 6 months.

Karen, from Cleveland, was laid off in March. She was laid off from a law firm due to budget constraints. She is 62 years old and unable to find a job in this economy. Unemployment insurance is helping her to get by with just the basic necessities. It is allowing her to pay for expensive but necessary prescriptions. She is actively looking for work, but she is afraid that if her unemployment benefits are cut, she will lose her house. Karen's State unemployment benefits can run out at the end of December.

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If Congress fails to act to renew the Federal unemployment insurance program, she'll become just another statistic, one of the millions of Americans who identify themselves with the 99 percent. Karen, along with 6 million Americans, will be cut off from emergency lifeline saving resources unless Congress acts.

Sandra, of Cleveland Heights, lost her job in April 2011. It's her third lay-off. She is 59 years old. She never thought she would find herself in this position at this age.

Rather than defaulting on her mortgage, she has used up all of her retirement savings. Now she is deeper into debt. When her unemployment funds run out, it's likely she will default. And being an older worker, it makes it even harder.

We see this scenario all too often across this Nation, hardworking Americans getting laid off, using up their savings, and then losing their homes. We've seen foreclosure rates soar, and Americans are falling behind on their mortgage payments at a very rapid rate. In my district, more than 13 percent of homeowners are 90 or more days behind on their mortgage.

In 2010, unemployment benefits kept 3 million Americans, including nearly 1 million children, from falling into poverty. Extending unemployment insurance can prevent the loss of over 500,000 jobs, according to the Economic Policy Institute—500,000 jobs.

You know why? Because UI payments go directly into the economy. They support local businesses. They help create jobs and reduce the demand for public services. If we don't extend unemployment insurance, it would be the equivalent of pulling nearly \$90 billion out of the economy in 2012.

There's one more story I'd like to tell you. It's from Molly in Toledo. I tell Molly's story because it embodies the frustration felt by thousands upon

thousands of American across this country.

Molly has battled unemployment since October 2008. She wonders how the rich and powerful expect people like her to survive without good-paying jobs. "Are we just supposed to die," she asks? "Commit suicide? Starve to death while we are homeless and on the streets?"

Molly says: "The deck really seems to be stacked against ordinary Americans. No one with any real power seems to care, except Warren Buffett."

"I'm trying to find a good job," she says, "or any job for that matter. We, the unemployed are demonized by the right and discriminated against for being out of work. We're too old or overqualified or underqualified, or we're the wrong color. What has happened to my country?" she asks.

These are the stories of everyday Americans who are struggling to get by. This is not about Democrats and Republicans. This is about coming together to help millions of unemployed Americans get through the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. It's about helping our economy grow and about creating jobs.

Americans are frustrated with the decline of the middle class and the lack of good-paying jobs. But these honorable citizens haven't given up, and neither can we. We must act now. We must extend unemployment insurance.

## WHY ARE WE STILL IN AFGHANISTAN?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, when we were home during the Thanksgiving break, like all my colleagues, I did as much as I could to be with the people of the Third District of North Carolina. The Third District is the home of Camp Lejeune Marine Base, Cherry Point Marine Air Station, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, and over 60,000 retired veterans in the Third District.

Since coming back to Washington, I've done two town meetings by phone. What I heard while I was home during Thanksgiving and the two town meetings: Why are we still in Afghanistan?

When I hear my colleagues in both parties talking about the problems facing the American people—unemployment benefits, extending the tax cuts for middle class America—we all grapple with, both parties, how we are going to pay for it.

Well, there is a man in Afghanistan that is a crook and corrupt, who gets \$10 billion a month that he doesn't have to worry about. Poor Americans are out here doing the best they can in a very difficult economy, and we can't help them, but we can help a corrupt leader in Afghanistan. It makes no sense. I hope that this Congress will come together and say to the President, let's not wait till 2014.

How many more American boys and girls will have to die and give their legs in the next 3 years for a corrupt leader? I've asked the Department of Defense, and I wrote Secretary Panetta and asked him that question. Give me your projections of how many more young men and women will have to die and lose their legs. I hope that I get that response soon.

That brings me to the point of a young marine I saw at Walter Reed/Bethesda about 3 weeks ago. There were four marines from the Third District of North Carolina. Three have lost both legs, and the one that had lost only one leg, a corporal, mom sitting in the room, said to me, Sir, may I ask you a question? I said certainly you may. Why are we still in Afghanistan? And I looked at him and I said, I don't know why we're still there.

Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense. The American people and the people of the Third District of North Carolina are saying, we have won; bin Laden is dead; al Qaeda has been dispersed all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is time, as we debate these very difficult, complex issues for our Nation, that we get smart with our foreign policy. And smart means, let's don't try to police the world.

History has proven you will never change Afghanistan. It will never change, no matter what we do or any other country tries to do.

So, Mr. Speaker, beside me is a poster with a flag-draped coffin coming off the plane at Dover. And with humility I tell you today, Mr. Speaker, I've signed over 10,400 letters to families and extended families who've lost loved ones in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I thank God that He has allowed me to have a heart large enough to feel the pain of war, because I've never been to war. But when I sign those letters, I feel the pain of the families, and I lick every envelope that I send.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I want to close my comments by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform, God to please bless the families who've lost loved ones fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. God, please bless the House and Senate that we will do what's right for the American people. Bless Mr. Obama that he will do what is right for the American people.

And three times I will say, God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks, I want to publicly associate myself with everything WALTER JONES just said. He is absolutely right.

Mr. Speaker, this holiday season Congress has chances, a couple of chances right in front of them to do